



Sandy River Reservoir 2005



Sandy River Reservoir is a 740-acre impoundment located just east of Farmville in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The impoundment was created in 1994, and opened to public fishing in 1996. The lake is owned by Prince Edward County but the fishery is managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The lake provides a warmwater fishery for largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, chain pickerel, and channel catfish.

Fish surveys during 2004 showed that the fishery in Sandy River was in excellent condition. Sandy River currently supports one of the better sportfish assemblages found anywhere in the piedmont region. Largemouth bass populations have reached remarkable levels with many fish over 22 inches and up to 10 pounds now being caught in the reservoir. There are also plenty of smaller fish entering the fishery each year, which will contribute to the big fish catch for the next several years. Largemouth bass is by far the dominant fishery at Sandy River with 60% of angler effort concentrated on bass. In 2004, the length limit on bass was changed from a 14-inch minimum to a 14-20 slot limit to protect fast-growing bass and allow them to reach lunker sizes. This regulation also allows for the harvest of smaller fish for those who enjoy taking a stringer home. Only two fish over 20 inches may be harvested but a total of five fish can be harvested per day.

The black crappie population in Sandy River Reservoir continues to be dominated by fish in the 7-8 inch range. In a recent creel survey, crappie were second only to largemouth bass in hours spent fishing for the species. Fish up to 14 inches are caught but numbers of these large fish are low. Unfortunately, with every year class of fish, there are both fast growing and slow growing individuals. Typically, the fast growing ones have higher mortality rates, due to either angler harvest or natural causes. The result over time is that the faster growing fish are removed, and the population becomes dominated by smaller fish. Anglers will have to be satisfied with high catch rates of slightly smaller-sized crappie at Sandy River.

Another noteworthy fishery is channel catfish. Anglers are reporting very nice fish being harvested – typically in the two to five pound range. Catfish up to 28 inches have been harvested from Sandy and the most often kept fish are in the 16-18 inch size range. A study is currently underway to determine the extent of natural reproduction in the reservoir. Catfish are currently stocked at 10 fish/acre annually but if natural reproduction is significant, the stocking program can be terminated. With half of the fish caught in the 2004 season being released, there might even be potential to enhance the fishery through more restrictive harvest regulations.

Bluegill and redear sunfish are also very popular fisheries at Sandy River. Harvest of sunfish is higher than any other species in the reservoir and is dominated by 7-8 inch fish. Fish up to 11 inches were harvested in 2004 so there is good potential to catch some really quality sunfish at Sandy River. Best places to fish for these two

species are around beaver huts or sunk Christmas tree habitat placed by VDGIF and the County. This is a great species to get kids hooked on fishing as they are ready biters and easy to get to the bank.

Habitat within the lake is somewhat limiting for some species. Prior to impoundment, the majority of trees and brush was removed in order to keep outflow gates from clogging. Two areas of standing timber were left in the reservoir, upper Marrowbone arm and upper Sandy River arm, and provide significant refuge for some fish. Additionally, the Game Department places brush fish attractors within the lake each winter. These are created with old evergreen trees donated by the residents of Prince Edward County. Hinge trees are also felled into the lake periodically to enhance the limited fisheries habitat.

Overall, it appears that Sandy River Reservoir is in excellent shape, and can provide anglers with ample opportunity to catch a variety of quality fish. It is likely that Sandy River will provide anglers with superb fishing opportunities in the years to come. The lake is open to fishing 24 hours a day and lake facilities include a boat ramp, handicap fishing pier, and porta-jons. Bank fishing opportunities are present in the area around the boat ramp, and a couple of areas around the lake. Boaters are restricted to outboard motors of 10 horsepower or less. The lake can be reached by taking 460 east out of Farmville, and turning south on Rt. 640. Take the first left after turning on Rt. 640 and follow this to the boat ramp.